
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Property Address:	3100 Macomb Street, NW (also 3029 Klingle Road, NW)	X	Agenda Consent Calendar
Landmark:	Tregaron (the Causeway)	X	Concept Review
Meeting Date:	May 31, 2012	X	Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	12-311		New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott		Demolition Subdivision

Tregaron Limited Partnership, represented by attorney Cynthia Giordano, seeks conceptual review for construction of a five foot high iron fence around a residential lot at the Tregaron estate, a DC and National Register landmark that is also located within the Cleveland Park Historic District. The fence would enclose a lot that was created in 2006 with the expectation that the parcel would be sold for residential development.

Property History and Description

Tregaron is a 21 acre estate, constructed between 1912 and 1914 for financier James Parmelee and designed by Charles Adams Platt, the premier architect of country houses in America. Platt's design for the estate – the house, its dependencies, and its grounds – was based on Beaux-Arts planning and design principles, with buildings aligned in axial relationships sited to take advantage of the natural topography and views to and from the property.

The landscape consisted of more formal gardens closest to the house and open meadows with woodland gardens around the edges of the property and following the site's two streambeds. The planting plans were developed by New York landscape architect Ellen Biddle Shipman over a number of years in consultation with the Parmelees. Shipman developed extensive plans for the woodland "wild" gardens; while appearing natural, these gardens were extensively cultivated to provide a series of idealized rustic and naturalistic environments.

Project Background

Since being designated a DC landmark in 1979, Tregaron has had a long preservation history. In 1980, the site was purchased jointly by the Tregaron Limited Partnership (TLP) and the Washington International School, and divided into two lots. The school's property includes the mansion and outbuildings at the top of the hill; TLP retained ownership of the remaining land with the intension of developing it. After years of redevelopment battles between the neighborhood and TLP, a remarkable agreement was reached in 2006 which resulted in 13 of the site's 14 acres being donated by TLP to a newly-created non-profit Tregaron Conservancy for the purpose of rehabilitating the landscape based on the original plans for public use and enjoyment. In exchange, several building lots were subdivided to allow for residential development. Two of those houses are currently under construction on Macomb Street. Five lots on the closed portion of Klingle Road will likely not be developed unless the city changes

its position on the reopening of that road. The remaining lot is the subject property on the open portion of Klingle Road adjacent to the Twin Oaks estate. The agreement established that upon the sale of each lot, TLP would make a financial donation to the Conservancy to support landscape rehabilitation efforts.

During the course of numerous reviews between 2005 and 2007, the Board and the Mayor's Agent approved the overall proposal for the site, the subdivision of the property to allow for residential development, and the designs of the individual houses.¹ As a condition of approval for the lots, the Board required that they be developed in a manner that would minimize the new property boundaries within the landmark and that the parcels continue to read as seamless with the surrounding property. Restrictive covenants were established that would require maintenance and upkeep of the plantings of the lots consistent with the comprehensive Tregaron Conservancy Landscape Plan, would prevent alteration of the exterior of the houses from plans approved by HPRB, and which prohibited development of swimming pools, tennis courts, and perimeter fencing.

Proposal

The proposed purchasers of the Klingle lot, Malini and Giri Jadeja, seek to erect a five foot high iron fence around the parcel's perimeter. In working with the HPO, ANC and Tregaron Conservancy, the proposal has been refined to include lowering the fence (initially proposed at 6-8 feet), and in pulling it substantially back from the stream bed at the north end of the lot. TLP, the proposed purchasers and the Conservancy have also agreed to a modest swap of land, conveying a portion of the lot to the Conservancy that more appropriately belongs to the Pond Valley in exchange for a narrow (2 foot) portion of the meadow edge to the house lot. The Conservancy has worked to develop a detailed planting plan of understory trees and shrubs, consistent with the property's landscape plan, on its land to soften the appearance of the proposed fence; the applicants would develop a similar plan for their side of the property to further envelop the fence within a planted woodland edge.

Evaluation

As outlined in the letter from the Conservancy, conditions at Tregaron have substantially changed since the property agreement was reached. The initial efforts in repairing the landscape have been focused on removing decades of invasive plants and dead and dying trees, such that the landscape is significantly more open now than anytime in recent memory or as planned by Shipman. The long process of reintroducing trees and the largely-missing understory of the land has only just begun and will ultimately be a generational commitment.

While the goal of ensuring that the residential lots not be visually severed from the landmark was certainly appropriate, limiting these lots from having any physical barrier from a popular public park has complicated efforts to develop the lot and continue the landscape's rehabilitation. More importantly, as is evidenced by existing fences at the edge of the property, prohibiting fences around this lot isn't necessary to achieve the goal. As is shown by the

¹ The agreement also included Washington International School, allowing for its construction of a playing field and academic building and a modest increase in the school's enrollment, and establishing obligations for the school's rehabilitation of its property.

portions of the fence separating Tregaron from neighboring Twin Oaks, if the fence is contained within a planted area of understory planting, it doesn't read as a substantial architectural intrusion within the landscape but rather is understood as a natural edge that still allows the eye to see through and around it. By lowering the height of the fence, simplifying its design, locating it with regard to topography (at the top of the stream bed rather than in it, and at the edge of the woodland), and developing it in concert with a proposed planting plan, the sense of the larger landscape would remain intact.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the proposed five foot iron fence and associated landscape planting plans to be consistent with its goal of preserving the character of Tregaron's landscape and consistent with the purposes of the preservation act, and delegate final approval to staff.